

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Ana Zapata and I am a resident of Meriden,

I stand in support of S.B. 284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18 regardless of immigration status is an important step in ensuring our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we need. But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 18; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

When I was healthy, I worked caring for the elderly as a caregiver. I was an essential worker who was exposed throughout the pandemic, I also worked in a cleaning company for a financial company. Being a migrant, I came with a lot of desire to work and build a better future for my children and myself. I never had access to insurance, I experienced discrimination and was denied care, which hurt my heart, because I am a human being and I have the same rights as others.

I had an accident and fell into a river, and two days later I lost sight in one eye. When I looked for an ophthalmologist, the surprise was that to just have a checkup he wanted to charge me more than eight hundred dollars, since I did not have insurance. I felt so down and in that depression, I felt that I was worth more dead than alive, where people bring you expensive flowers and mourn your absence, but alive I only began to be an economic burden for my children and husband and receive the contempt of the whole community and the health system.

Today, thanks to the help of good people and organizations, I can say that I had surgery a few days ago to fix my problem. Previously, I had surgery 8 months ago and I did not recover my total vision. If I had had a prompt, effective and warm medical attention, surely today I could enjoy my sight, unfortunately when I tried to use one eye more than the other to continue working, I ended up damaging my other eye. It took more than a year to get to my operation and I have not worked for more than 11 months, because if I made any effort a nerve in my eye could break and I could lose my sight for life. Today I am waiting to return to my life, to work, although I do not know if it is for a better future or just to pay the debts generated by my misfortune this year.

What I do know is that today you have the opportunity to become the heroes of our children, because I don't want them to suffer what I have had to live through. I support S.B. 284 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time,

Ana Zapata